

Legislative Process

The chief function of Congress is the making of laws. The legislative process comprises a number of steps, and much information is available from this page concerning the legislation introduced and considered in the 111th Congress. Tying it all together provides a very brief overview of the legislative process within the House of Representatives and will help you understand the information and how it interrelates. However, there are many aspects and variations of the process which are not addressed. A much more in-depth discussion and presentation of the overall process is available in *How Our Laws are Made* and *Enactment of a Law*. A kid's version of how laws are made is also available.

Committee Reports

The House of Representatives divides its work among over twenty permanent committees. Normally, before a piece of legislation is considered by the House it has been reviewed by at least one of the committees and a report is issued by that committee describing the legislation and indicating (on section-by-section basis) how the proposed statute changes existing statutes. Congress divides its work among over two hundred committees and subcommittees, each of which issues regular reports on its activities.

Committee Hearings

After a bill is introduced on the House or Senate floor, it is referred to the committee of jurisdiction (i.e., the committee charged with reviewing measures in the area of law or policy with which the bill is concerned). The committee of referral most often sends the measure to its specialized subcommittee(s) for study, hearings, revisions and approval.

For most bills, the committee or subcommittee fails to take further action on the referred bill, effectively "killing" the measure at this point. (Occasionally, a committee will report a measure "unfavorably," with explicit recommendations against its passage, or it will report a bill "without recommendation," which has the same effect as an unfavorable report.)

If the bill passes the subcommittee with a favorable vote, it is sent back to the full committee for further consideration, hearings, amendment and vote.

- List of Today's Hearings Compiled by the House Radio-Television Correspondents' Gallery
- Congressional Committee Materials Online via GPO Access

Federal Laws

The U.S. Code

is the official compilation of the current Federal statutes of a general and permanent nature. The Code is arranged according to subject matter under 50 subject headings ('titles'). The Code sets out the current status of the laws, incorporating all amendments into the text. Prior to being added to the U.S. Code, individual laws are published in pamphlet form as "slip laws" which are later collected together in chronological order (not in subject order) as the Statutes at Large.

Proceedings of the House

The Congressional Record is the official transcript of the proceedings and debates of the U.S. Congress. The full text of the Congressional Record is published the day after each meeting of the House or Senate. Learn more about the Congressional Record. A summary of what is currently happening on the Floor of the House is available as the debate occurs. You can also view the House Floor schedules for this week and the House calendar for the current year.

Roll Call Votes

A roll call vote records how each Member of the House voted, but only a minority of bills receive a roll call vote. Learn more about compiling a Member voting record and how to read the roll call information.

Rules and Precedents of the House

The House Rules and Precedents

are the official documents that spell out the process by which legislation is considered by the House and its committees; as well as specifying the authority of the officers and committees of the House. Several collections of material explaining the rules and precedents are available through the House Rules Committee:

- General Parliamentary Procedure

- House Committee Procedures
- House Floor Procedures
- House and Senate Parliamentary Procedure (originally compiled by the Congressional Research Services of the Library of Congress)

Schedules of the House

Various schedules of upcoming House activities are available.

On a daily basis, there is the Majority Leader's Daily Leader and the Majority Whip's Daily WhipLine.

On a weekly basis, there is the Weekly House Program prepared by the Clerk of the House and the Weekly Leader prepared by the House Majority Leader.

On an annual basis, there is the House Schedule compiled by the Clerk of the House and the Majority Whip's annual House Calendar.